

## Concerning Fairness And Fallacies

2 ἔστι δὴ τῶν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι λόγων τέτταρα γένη,  
διδασκαλικοὶ καὶ διαλεκτικοὶ καὶ πειραστικοὶ καὶ ἔριστικοί,

διδασκαλικοὶ μὲν οἱ ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων ἀρχῶν ἐκάστου μαθή- 2  
ματος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ ἀποκρινομένου δοξῶν συλλο-  
γιζόμενοι (δεῖ γὰρ πιστεύειν τὸν μανθάνοντα), διαλεκτι-  
κοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν ἐνδόξων συλλογιστικοὶ ἀντιφάσειως, πει-  
ραστικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν δοκούντων τῷ ἀποκρινομένῳ καὶ 3  
ἀναγκαίῳ εἰδέναι τῷ προσποιουμένῳ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην  
(ὃν τρόπον δέ, διώρισται ἐν ἑτέροις), ἔριστικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ  
τῶν φαινομένων ἐνδόξων μὴ ὄντων δὲ συλλογιστικοὶ ἢ  
φαινόμενοι συλλογιστικοί. περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἀποδεικτικῶν  
ἐν τοῖς Ἀναλυτικοῖς εἴρηται, περὶ δὲ τῶν διαλεκτικῶν καὶ 10  
πειραστικῶν ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις· περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀγωνιστικῶν καὶ  
ἔριστικῶν νῦν λέγωμεν.

ooo

In the lands of the West, as often elsewhere in the world, the virtue of fairness has for centuries been admired with its cultivation in the individual regarded as a necessity for a civilized, cultured, society, based as the virtue was on restrained personal behaviour. {1} The virtue was enshrined in one of the principles of Western jurisprudence: that the burden of proof is on the person who accuses not on the accused. Hence the fairness of the presumption of innocence until probative evidence proves otherwise.

In the matter of knowledge and sources, the virtue implies and implied the use of primary not interpretative secondary sources and not the summaries of secondary sources that are tertiary sources; with a detailed study of primary sources the scholarly, the civilized, way for a person to understand, to acquire knowledge of, a philosophy or a weltanschauung or the life of an individual, be such a weltanschauung a spiritual or a religious one and be the individual a controversial figure or regarded as heretical in the societies of the past or the present.

Thus to understand in such a personal, scholarly, way the religion of Christianity a detailed study of the four gospels in their original language is required since they are primary sources in respect of that religion given that Christian tradition considers them the oldest and most reliable sources. Likewise, to understand in such a manner a philosophy such as that of Immanuel Kant a study of his writings, and his writings alone and in their original language is necessary, since to rely on the translations of others is to rely on the interpretation of those others, as is considering and giving weight to the opinions or the conclusions of others regarding Kant's philosophy.

However, in this era where the interpretations, the opinions, the conclusions, of others are readily available by means of printed books, the Mass Media, and mediums such as the Internet, this scholarly, civilized, rational, slow way to acquire a balanced knowledge and a direct personal understand of a subject or of the life of a person is a dying, unpopular, Cræft {2} even in academia. For the designation 'academic' in this era does not necessarily imply that a person who is employed in academia is learned, erudite, in a particular subject as for example the scholar Richard Jebb was erudite in Ancient Greek. Instead, it is often the case that a published work by a modern academic is not based on their own detailed scholarly research using primary sources but on the opinions, or the conclusions, of others, and thus often on fallacies such as Appeal to Authority.

The Fallacy Of Appeal To Authority is arguably the most used of all fallacies of reasoning {3} and is, either by intent or out of ignorance, especially popular among journalists, propagandists and politicians. Also known as the fallacy of Argumentum ad Verecundiam, it is somewhat misunderstood in this age of the Internet. It is not only citing or quoting a person or persons who is/are regarded, by the person citing or quoting or by others, as an authority or 'expert' on a subject but also citing or quoting the opinion given by some institution, or 'policy/advisory group' or similar, on a subject, regardless of whether or not the 'expert' or institution or whatever has their opinion published by some means or some medium regarded as 'mainstream', academic, or 'respectable' or authoritative.

The crux of the fallacy is a reliance by someone or by some others on who or what is regarded in a particular society as an authority on or as having a detailed or 'expert' knowledge of a subject or subjects. Thus a modern statement such as the fallacy of appeal to authority "is when the opinion of a non-expert on a topic is used as evidence" is itself fallacious because although it appears to be a decisive statement regarding 'authority' it is logically not so having not only restricted the fallacy to those are not 'experts' but does not define what an 'expert' or a 'false expert' is or are or who or what person or institution, or 'policy/advisory group' or similar has the 'authority' to declare someone an 'expert' or a 'false expert' in a certain subject or subjects, and from whence a person or an institution, o 'policy/advisory group' or similar derives their own authority to make such declarations.

The corollary of the appeal to authority, as defined above, is personal research by scholarly means of a subject using primary sources. Which leads to the definition of what constitutes primary sources and scholarly means.

### Scholarly

To be learned, to be a scholar in the traditional sense, is to have a profound knowledge gained by individual study.

**Scholarly** (skɒˈlɜːli), *a.* [f. SCHOLAR + -LY 1.]  
Not in Johnson or Todd.  
Pertaining to, or characterizing, a scholar; befit-  
ting, or natural to, a scholar; learned, erudite.

**Learned:**

**2.** Of a person: In early use, that has been taught; instructed, educated. In later use with narrowed sense: Having profound knowledge gained by study, esp. in language or some department of literary or historical science; deeply-read, erudite. Const. *in*. † *of*. (Superseding the earlier **LEARNED**.)  
*Learned society*: a society formed for the prosecution of some branch of learning or science.

The criteria of scholarship are: (i) a detailed, meticulous, unbiased original research on and concerning a specific topic or topics or subject undertaken over a period of time, usually a year or more in duration and involving primary source material; (ii) an ability to be able to read primary sources in their original language; and (iii) a rational assessment of the knowledge acquired by such research, with such conclusions about the topic, topics, or subject being the logical result of the cumulative scholarly learning so acquired. If the researcher cannot read primary sources in their original language and has to rely on the translations of others then their conclusions are not original and not scholarly just as if they commit logical fallacies - such as the fallacy of Incomplete Evidence - then their conclusions are also not scholarly.

## Primary Sources

Primary sources include contemporaneous manuscripts, letters, diaries, memoirs, personal journals, interviews, speeches, and other materials individuals used to describe (i) events in which they were participants or observers, and (ii) ideas or creations - such as a philosophy, music, literature, or art-work - which they were responsible for. Hence in the matter of a philosophy such as that of Heidegger the primary sources are his published writings, authenticated recordings or transcriptions of his speeches/lectures, and authenticated unpublished manuscripts if any. The writings, opinions, and conclusions of others about that philosophy, and other translations of his work, are secondary sources, with compilations of quotations from such secondary sources, a tertiary source. {4}

## A Presumption Of Innocence

The civilized rule, the fair thing to do, was that unless a person had done their own research using primary source material or had personal direct contemporaneous experience of an event or had extensive personal experience of a group, or personally knew a person over an extended period of time, then they reserved their judgment and did not venture forth, did not publicly give, their opinion. In respect of a person, accused of something or the subject of rumours, they gave them the benefit of the doubt until probative evidence proved otherwise.

However, in this era of Mass Media, of social media, of weblogs, internet websites and forums, this civilized rule is at best deprecated and at worst ignored or not applied often because of ignorance or because of a propagandistic desire to defame a person or a group, with fallacies such as Ad Populum now the general rule instead.

## Conclusion

The committance by so many, in this era of the Internet and of Mass Media, of fallacies of reasoning seems to be indicative of how the standards of the West, intellectual and otherwise, have declined, with logical reasoning, scholarly research, fairness, and intellectual rigour replaced by propaganda, emotive opinion and the widespread use, intentionally or from ignorance, of fallacies such as Ad Populum, Argumentum ad Hominem, illicit Transference, Incomplete Evidence and Appeal To Authority.

R.M.  
2023

{1} qv. Cicero, De Officiis, Liber Primus, 142,

Haec autem scientia continentur ea, quam Graeci εὐταξίαν nominant, non hanc, quam interpretamur modestiam, quo in verbo modus inest, sed illa est εὐταξία, in qua intellegitur ordinis conservatio

Those two qualities are evident in that way described by the Greeks as εὐταξίαν although what is meant by εὐταξία is not what we mean by the moderation of the moderate, but rather what we consider is restrained behaviour

Translated by DW Myatt, *An Appreciation of The Numinous*, in *The Numinous Way of Pathei-Mathos*, seventh edition, 2022, <https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

{2} Cræft: this older spelling implies more than the modern usage associated with the word 'craft'.

III. † 5. The learning of the schools, scholarship. b. (with *a* and *pl.*) A branch of learning or knowledge, a science. *The seven crafts*: the 'seven arts' of the mediæval Universities: see ART 7. *Obs.*

c 1205 LAY. 10923 On bocken heo cuðe godne cræft. *Ibid.* 30493 An clarc þe com from Spaine . . feole craftes he cuðe. a 1225 Leg. Kath. 522 Fifti scolmeistres, of alle þe creftes þet clerc ah to cunnen. a 1300 Cursor M. 4647 (Cott.) þe seuen craftes all he can. a 1400-50 Alexander 33 þe pasage of þe planetis, þe poyntes & þe sygnes. þai ware þe kiddes of þat craft knawyn in þaire tyme. 1483 Cath. Angl. 79 A Crafte, *ars liberalis, sciencia* [etc.]. 1530 PALSGR. 210/1 Crafte of multiplyeing, *alquenemie*.

IV. A branch of skilled work.

6. An art, trade, or profession requiring special skill and knowledge; *esp.* a manual art, a HANDICRAFT; sometimes applied to any business, calling, or profession by which a livelihood is earned.

c 897 K. ÆLFRED Gregory's Past. i. 24 Se cræft þæs lareowdomes bið cræft ealra cræfta. c 900 Bæda's Hist. iv. xiii, Seo þeod ðone cræft ne cuðe ðæs fiscnoþes. c 1040 Rule St. Benet 94 For ingehide his cræftes. 1340 Ayenb.

{3} A summary of fallacies of reasoning is provided in the Appendix.

[4] The now universally used internet resource Wikipedia is a tertiary source based, in the case of individuals and groups, almost entirely on secondary sources and thus is a collection of the opinions and interpretations of others, with primary sources deprecated and subject to the vague condition that if used they should not be unduly "self-serving" leaving this condition being open to dispute and subject to the interpretation of mostly anonymous and often judgmental individuals.

In addition, Wikipedia has a condition that "fringe" views and theories, defined as what departs significantly from the prevailing views or mainstream views in a particular field or subject should be removed. That is, that certain views and theories should be censored or belittled because they diverge from the existing status quo or from beliefs and theories regarded as acceptable or "true" in a current society or societies.

The result is that those using Wikipedia as a source of information about individuals and groups and theories commit the fallacy of Appeal To Authority and/or the fallacy of Ad Populum.

ooo

## Appendix

### Common Fallacies Of Reasoning

#### The Fallacy Of Appeal To Authority

The fallacy of appeal to authority, also known as the fallacy of Argumentum ad Verecundiam, is somewhat misunderstood in this age of the Internet. It is not only citing or quoting a person or persons who is/are regarded, by the person citing or quoting or by others, as an authority or 'expert' on a subject but also citing or quoting the opinion given by some institution, or 'policy/advisory group' or similar, on a subject, regardless of whether or not the 'expert' or institution or whatever has their opinion published by some means or some medium regarded as 'mainstream', academic, or 'respectable' or authoritative.

The crux of the fallacy is a reliance by someone or by some others on who or what is regarded in a particular society as an authority on or as having a detailed or 'expert' knowledge of a subject or subjects.

Thus a statement such as the fallacy of appeal to authority "is when the opinion of a non-expert on a topic is used as "evidence" is itself fallacious because although it appears to be a decisive statement regarding 'authority' it is logically not so having not only restricted the fallacy to those are not 'experts' but does not define what an 'expert' or a 'false expert' is or are or who or what person or institution, or 'policy/advisory group' or similar has the 'authority' to declare someone an 'expert' or a 'false expert' in a certain subject or subjects, and from whence a person or an institution, or 'policy/advisory group' or similar derives their own authority to make such declarations.

The corollary of the appeal to authority is personal research by scholarly means of a subject using primary sources.

#### Fallacy Of Ad Populum

This is when a person either 'follows the crowd' and believes or claims that because so many others have claimed or believe something it is probably true, or when they are convinced, usually emotively, by a propagandist or politician or by some populist speaker that something is true or that someone or some many are guilty or culpable.

#### Fallacy Of Argumentum ad Hominem

This belongs to the category ignoratio elenchi. Argumentum ad hominem is when the character and/or the motives and/or the identity of the person presenting an argument is/are maligned or called into question often in an attempt to deflect attention away from the topic being discussed or from the opponents failure to answer questions asked of them or provide the evidence they were asked to provide.

#### Fallacy of Composition

Also known as the Fallacy of Illicit Transference. This is an example of equivocation, and is when a generalization is made from a few specific instances or examples with the generalization then applied to pejoratively describe or malign a group or organization or person.

Fallacy Of The False Cause

Generally referred to by the Latin phrase *non causa pro causa*. This fallacy is the assumption that one thing is the cause of another without any logical reasoning.

Fallacy Of Incomplete Evidence

Also known as the fallacy of suppressed evidence. This is when evidence which disproves or may disprove a claim or conclusion is not considered either deliberately (suppressed evidence) or because of a lack of detailed and scholarly research.



Image Credit

Aristotelis Hermeneutica Analytica Elenctica ex recensione Immanuelis Bekkeri seorsum edita 1843

Ἔστι δὴ τῶν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι λόγων τέτταρα γένη, διδασκαλικοὶ καὶ διαλεκτικοὶ καὶ πειραστικοὶ καὶ ἐριστικοί· διδασκαλικοὶ μὲν οἱ ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων ἀρχῶν ἐκάστου μαθήματος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ ἀποκρινομένου δοξῶν συλλογιζόμενοι (δεῖ γὰρ πιστεύειν τὸν μανθάνοντα), διαλεκτικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν ἐνδόξων συλλογιστικοὶ ἀντιφάσεως, πειραστικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν δοκούντων τῷ ἀποκρινομένῳ καὶ ἀναγκαίῳ εἰδέναι τῷ προσποιουμένῳ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην (ὃν τρόπον δέ, διώρισται ἐν ἑτέροις), ἐριστικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν φαινομένων ἐνδόξων, μὴ ὄντων δέ, συλλογιστικοὶ ἢ φαινόμενοι συλλογιστικοί.

Περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἀποδεικτικῶν ἐν τοῖς Ἀναλυτικοῖς εἴρηται, περὶ δὲ τῶν διαλεκτικῶν καὶ πειραστικῶν ἐν ἄλλοις· περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀγωνιστικῶν καὶ ἐριστικῶν νῦν λέγωμεν.



This item is in the Public Domain